LODI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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IN THE NEWS ...

1898, Lodi Sentinel Office in the Ivory Building; l to r: Matt Hamilton, Oscar Ivory, Ada L. (Corbin) Hutchins

Woodbridge Messenger

The oldest newspaper in northern San Joaquin County was founded May 18, 1865 by Shekells and Spencer.

J.C. Spencer was publishing the *Mountain News* at San Andreas when the town was being deserted due to the scarcity of gold in that region.

The partners moved the printing plant to Woodbridge but Mr. Shekells was not happy there so they split as owners.

Spencer published the weekly paper for two years and then sold to George Crist. The entire newspaper consisted of four pages measuring 12½ inches by 20½ inches.

Mr. Crist discontinued the *Messenger* when the bulk of his subscribers moved from Woodbridge to Mokelumne.

The Valley Review

The town Mokelumne was started in 1869 and four years later the name was changed to Lodi. Two years later Mr. George Cluff and his wife Gertie followed her sister Laura to Lodi.

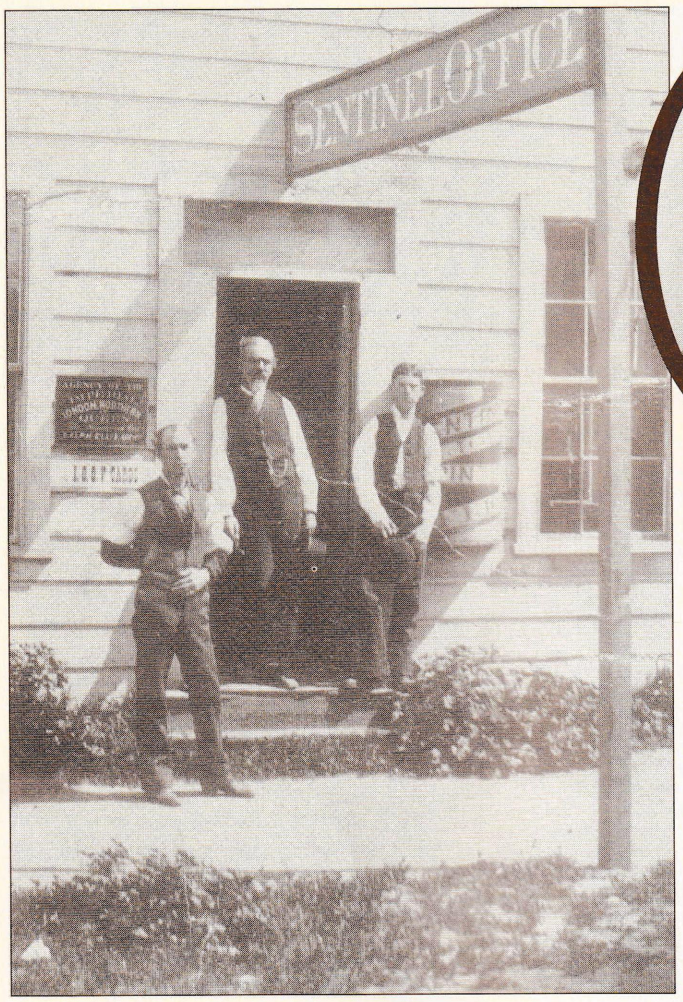
Laura DeForce Gordon started working in Stockton as editor for a women's page in June 1873. On September 20, 1873 Laura had her own newspaper, and eight months later issued the *Daily Leader*. She was probably the first woman in the United States to own and edit a daily newspaper. At the end of 1874 Mrs. Gordon had moved her paper from Stockton to Sacramento.

Since March of 1850, sixteen newspapers had started in Stockton and most had an early demise.

Mrs. Laura DeForce Gordon helped her sister start Lodi's first paper, *The Valley Review*, on July 20, 1878. It received a warm welcome by local residents. It was not only Lodi's first newspaper, but it had the distinction of being published by a woman, Mrs. Gertie DeForce Cluff, an advocate of women's suffrage like her sister.

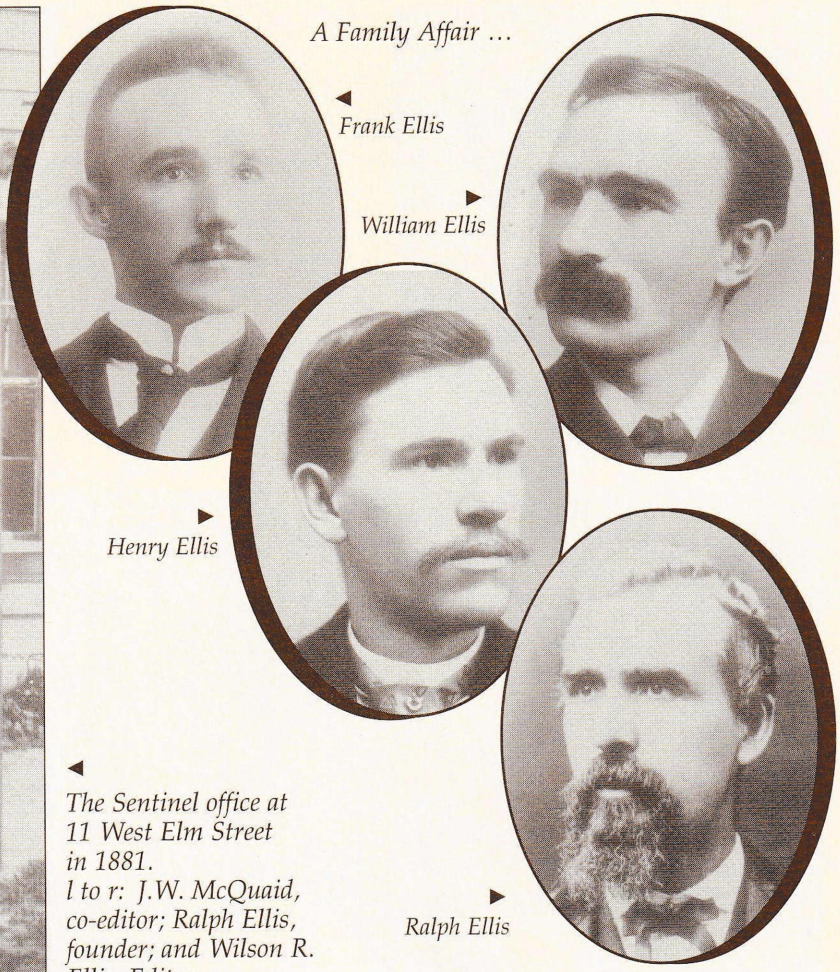
In the six years that Mrs. Cluff published *The Valley Review*, she showed herself equal to the occasion. She started with a five-column folio 13 inches by 19 inches and later enlarged to a seven-column folio 24 by 36 inches which appeared as a weekly. Mrs. Cluff proved conclusively that a woman was capable of publishing a newspaper and that she was an able editress as well.

In the early days of newspaper publishing in California, editors were much like the first gold-rush seekers, rough, ready and primitive. Editors made swords



The Sentinel office at 11 West Elm Street in 1881. l to r: J.W. McQuaid, co-editor; Ralph Ellis, founder; and Wilson R. Ellis, Editor

A Family Affair ...



Frank Ellis

William Ellis

Henry Ellis

Ralph Ellis

of their tongues, so sharp that many was the resultant clash between opponents. Physical conflict or a challenge of a duel were not unheard of.

Mrs. Cluff was a witty writer and not the least backward in expressing her opinions of other papers or their editors. In return, while sometimes praised, she often received back as good as she sent.

Gertie's publication was a well managed and newsy contribution to the growth of this agricultural village. There was seldom local news on the front page. Advertisements were sometimes inserted sideways. Her paper was filled with spicy items tinged with humor, while her columns were often adorned with illustrations. The headquarters of *The Valley Review* was given as Main Street. In those days, our present Sacramento Street was called Main Street.

Soon after the *Lodi Sentinel* came into existence in 1881, it made the comment that *"The Valley Review* has changed its publishing day from Saturday to Tuesday. This will give our feminine contemporary ample time to gather all the news."

In August of 1884 Mrs. Cluff sold *The Valley Review* to Wolcott and Cheyney. Earle A. Wolcott became editor.

Eight months later, April 22, 1885 the paper was sold to Bloomer and Moore. Their motto was "We Help Those Who Help Us." They failed to make good with the paper, which was attached by the sheriff and sold.

Frank B. Cluff, age 21 and son of Gertie DeForce Cluff, had formerly acted as manager of the *Cyclone*, issued a second *Valley Review* on August 16, 1888. Gertie Cluff was the associate editor and Laura DeForce was "Traveling Correspondent."

The *Lodi Sentinel* reported that Frank Cluff was back at the helm of *The Valley Review* July 30, 1892.

We know that the paper was still going two years later but the date of the last edition is not known. We do know that in 1896 Frank Cluff was printing the *Esparto Press* in Yolo County.

Lodi Sentinel

The first edition of the *Lodi Sentinel* was on July 9, 1881. It was four pages with seven columns and was printed on a Washington hand press. The paper was housed in a one-story building located at 11 West Elm Street. It was a weekly newspaper that appeared on Saturday with Wilson R. Ellis, editor and J.W. McQuaid, co-editor. Ralph Ellis, father of Wilson, actually advanced the funds to start the paper.

The early years of the *Sentinel* were very much a family affair. First one and then another of the three brothers, plus the father, Ralph Ellis, assumed control of the paper.

The Ellis family was very important to the start of our longest running business of Lodi.

▶ *1890: The Sentinel office was on the second floor of the G.W. Hill Jewelry and the Harry Lillie Taylor Shop.*

l to r: Frank Ellis, Henry Ellis, L. Williams, Marion Gum and Tom Boalt.

From the first issue of *The Sentinel*, Editor Wilson Ellis took issue with the town notoriety for drunkenness and he fearlessly badgered men who beat their families and livestock, referring to those individuals as scoundrels and inhuman beasts.

In May 1884 Ralph Ellis became Editor and Business Manager of *The Sentinel*. Fourteen months later Wilson Ellis was again Editor and Proprietor until October 9, 1886 when W.R. Ellis announces that he has assumed control of the *Morning Mail* in Woodland and that Ralph Ellis will again take charge of *The Sentinel*.

This all changed again when Wilson sold the Lodi paper to his brother Frank in December of the same year.

Nine months later in September, 1887, Frank E. Ellis sells one half the paper to Tom W. Boalt and the plant moves upstairs of the Grangers Store, S.W. corner of Elm and Sacramento Streets. *The Sentinel* was published on a daily schedule for six months.

Ralph Ellis was born March 19, 1829 in New York. He came to Downieville, Sierra County at age 21. After a short try at mining he became a stage guard for Wells Fargo, agent for Wilson and Evarts Bank in Downieville and County Clerk before leaving Sierra County for Napa County where he had the job of sheriff as well as running the historic Bale Mill near St. Helena.

In 1870 Ralph and family moved to San Joaquin County and farmed south of Stockton. Seven years later he operated a flour mill at Lodi.

Ralph Ellis was a charter member of Lodi Lodge #256 of Masons and the first Master in 1879.

The Ellis home stood on the N.E. corner of School and Oak Streets and became the House Hotel before moving to east Pine Street to make room for The Toggery.

Ralph and Caroline Ellis were the parents of five children. Wilson R., Frank E., Henry F., Carrie (Mills) and Margaret (Porter).

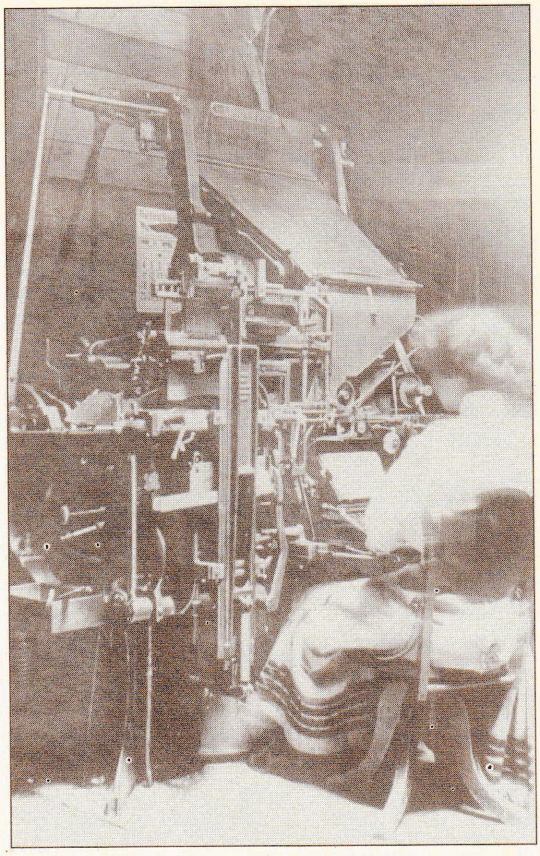
In October 1881 the *Lodi Sentinel* had 3,000 blotting pads for free distribution. They gave an epitomized history of Woodbridge, Lockeford, Acampo, New Hope, Elliott, Poland and Lodi.

In February 1882 the paper moved above Jake Baker's Harness Shop on Sacramento Street.

The youthful impetuosity of the founders impelled them to throw discretion and diplomacy to the winds and on March 25, 1882 they took the *Valley Review* to task for so-called grammatical errors and had a contest, with prizes, for school children for an exercise in violations of English grammar in Mrs. Gertie DeForce Cluff's paper.

In April of the same year, Wilson Ellis bought out Jack W. McQuaid and the *Sentinel* was enlarged to eight columns. One month later the plant was moved back to Elm Street to Nevins Hall where McQuaid continued to operate the printing department.

Women were not excluded from running the linotype machines. Ell Corbin sets type in 1907 for the Sentinel. ▼



In August of the same year, Henry F. Ellis married Loche M. Green, youngest daughter of Jasper Green of Lodi. Henry at that time was City Editor of the *"Woodland Mail,"* which his brother Wilson had just founded.

In July of 1888 Frank Ellis sold his half interest in *The Sentinel* to brother Henry who moved to Lodi for a short time before returning to Woodland.

Two years later *The Sentinel* moved to the Hill Building where an upstairs hall has been added.

In 1893, Watson C. Green was Editor and S.B. Axtell as Manager according to the November issues.

September 3, 1895 Ralph Ellis dies and five months later the paper he founded moved upstairs in the Bank of Lodi building on the N.W. corner of Pine and Sacramento Streets and Henry Ellis returned to Lodi.

In 1898 water power was used to operate the presses. The Lilly Bros. next door may have been the source. Lilly Bros. owned the first telephone exchange and first automobile garage besides being a bicycle shop.

April 30, 1901 *The Sentinel* changed from weekly to publishing on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and in July, Sam Axtell purchased the paper.

George H. Moore started working for the paper and Matt Hamilton, employed by *The Sentinel* for eleven years becomes City Editor of the *Grass Valley Union.*

October 4, 1904, two years after the city of Lodi has electricity, it is installed in *The Sentinel* office. The machinery does not go electric until later when continuous service is produced.

In June of 1907 *The Lodi Sentinel* is in a new location in a galvanized tin building on the east side of North School Street between Pine and Elm Streets.

S.B. Axtell, editor of *The Sentinel* from 1901 until 1911, was a colorful and fearless writer. News columns cared little for the laws of libel – if such existed – and a spade was called a spade. If an errant farmer left his wife and family to camp amid the beauties of Yosemite with another member of the fair sex under circumstances not sanctioned by custom or law, such accounts could be found in the *Lodi Sentinel.*

November 4, 1909 *The Sentinel* offers newspaper delivery within the city for 25 cents per month.

The morning of June 16, 1911 Samuel B. Axtell, editor of *The Sentinel* fired three shots at Charlie Sollars in the Lodi Garage on Pine Street. Two of the bullets took effect and Mr. Sollars passed away early the following morning.

As a small boy, Maurice Hill heard the shots fired. He and his sister, Nellie ran out of their father's jewelry store but could see nothing at the time. Axtell was convicted and served time in jail.

A week later, employees of *The Sentinel*, Fordyce P. Roper and George H. Moore operated the paper on Axtell's behalf.

On September 5, 1911 F.P. Roper, Manager and G.H. Moore, Editor formed a partnership and acquired the business for $25,000.

Two months later *The Sentinel* purchased the assets of the defunct *"Lodi Post."*

In March of 1913 *The Lodi Sentinel* started building a new home for the paper at 11 North School Street. Fifteen months later they were settled in a fine ground floor building where they would stay for the next 33 years.

The Lodi News

The Lodi News was started in 1916 by a man named Ramsburgin. The office was located on the S.E. corner of Elm and School Streets.

A short time later the publication was sold to J. Mackeld and Fred J. DeMille who called the paper the *Northern San Joaquin County News.*

In 1918, Mr. DeMille assumed full control of the paper and he changed the name to *The Lodi News.* Later DeMille sold one half interest to Delmar Rinfret whose newspaper experience dated back to 1908.

In August 1920 *The News* was moved to 114 N. Sacramento Street and became a tri-weekly, appearing on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. It was printed on a new model Linotype Fourteen.

Fred DeMille sold his interest in *The News* in 1925 to Harley M. Leeth. A year later the plant was moved to larger quarters at 118 N. Sacramento Street. Seven years later Mr. Leeth sold his interest to O.L. Powell and at that time it became an afternoon daily.

◄ *Sam Axtell, editor of the Lodi Sentinel, early 1900.*

November, 1920. The Lodi News was owned by Delmar Rinfret and Fred DeMille, the later shown at work.

Delmar Rinfret seated at his desk at the Lodi News. This was taken at the time Warren G. Harding was running for president.

On July 3, 1933 Clyde C. Church came into full control of *The Lodi News* purchasing it from Rinfret and Powell.

For a time Mr. Church published two editions a day as an experiment to determine whether a morning or afternoon paper was most desired by the public. The results indicated that the morning paper was more popular.

Clyde Church started in the newspaper field at an early age. At age seven he was sweeping floors for the *Visalia Delta* paper and was earning $1.50 a week.

June 22, 1935 – F.P. Roper and George H. Moore, owners of the *Lodi Sentinel* since 1911, dissolved their partnership, with Roper assuming complete ownership. In 1934, George Moore had been appointed California State Printer by Governor Frank Merriam. He held this position under three Governors, and retired in 1946.

July 24, 1935 – At the request of local merchants who had signed a petition, the *Lodi Sentinel* and *Lodi News* merged and published the first edition of the *Lodi-News Sentinel* on this date. Clyde Church, owner of the *News*, was named Publisher and F.P. Roper, owner of the *Sentinel*, was named Editor of the combined publication. Arthur Marquardt, son-in-law of F.P. Roper, joins the *Lodi-News Sentinel* as Sports Editor. Circulation of the new, combined newspaper was stated as 4,627.

December 2, 1937 Mr. F.P. Roper passed away and his wife Della succeeded to his interest in the *News-Sentinel*.

In 1943 Mrs. Roper appointed Arthur Marquardt, her son-in-law, as Editor of the *News-Sentinel*.

After the death of Mrs. Roper in September 1945, Marquardt (Marq) purchased her interest and became a partner with Clyde C. Church.

Marq's column "Over Morning Coffee," appeared on the left side of the front page from November 8, 1936 to March 31, 1959.

May 30, 1947 the *News-Sentinel* moved to its ninth location at 212 W. Pine Street.

The Lodi Times

The Lodi Times made its first appearance on Friday, August 23, 1935. Co-partners Clifford H. Moore, Editor and George E. Moore, Business Manager were sons of George H. Moore, one time-co-publisher of the *Lodi Sentinel*.

The paper was a weekly, printed every Friday morning. The 17½ inch by 22½ inch *Times* had an announced policy of presenting the news in an interesting, accurate and dependable manner while attuned to the progress of the community.

The *Lodi Times* changed its day or days of publication from time to time. In 1936 the paper appeared every Tuesday and Friday. A year later it was published daily and continued as such until 1943, when they reduced their publication to every Thursday. From 1949 to 1951 it was a Friday edition.

September 1, 1951, The Snyder Publishing Co., comprised of H.C. Snyder, his wife Marie and two sons, Howard C. (Cal), Jr. and Gene purchased the *Times* from the

Moore brothers and in September 1952 publication changed back to Thursday.

The Snyders ran the paper until Friday, April 1, 1955 when Clyde Church and Arthur W. Marquardt, owners of the *News-Sentinel* took charge of the *Lodi Times*.

A summary of some other newspapers published in the Lodi area:

The Lockeford Bulletin was first issued in July 1882 with Tommy Riggs named on the Masthead. The report in the *Lodi-Sentinel* of July 22, said it is "fostered" by the *Lodi Valley Review*. Tommy Riggs worked for Gertie DeForce Cluff at the latter paper.

The Mokelumne Maverick newspaper was in circulation each Saturday in 1883 and 1884 by William H. Marshall. Mr. Marshall was a controversial figure and considered something of a character. He was a very tall, thin man and not too tidy in appearance. He wore a cowboy hat and usually had one pant leg up above an untied boot while the other was down.

The *Maverick* news sheet was a large size, being 17½ by 22½ inches with seven columns on a page. Gertie Cluff referred to this newspaper as "the swill tub."

On August 20, 1884, the sarcastic Marshall at age 27 married 19-year old Miss Lilla Grove of Lodi. It was about this time that he moved the newspaper to Stockton and two years later W.H. Marshall was in Hawaii and twenty-two years later he was planning to start another newspaper in Shanghai, China.

On May 9, 1885 the *Lodi Sentinel* reported the "*Maverick*" for weeks has teamed with abuse against the San Joaquin Valley College as well as the men and women of Woodbridge and their sons and daughters attending the school.

Another article reflecting on the character of R.C. Sargent is a piece of fabrication.

The Lodi Cyclone was started on September 24, 1885 by Mrs. Gertie DeForce Cluff in opposition to the *Valley Review* which she founded and sold in 1884.

In 1886 Gertie sold the *Lodi Cyclone* to W.L. Howell and Mr. Matheson. On December 8 they changed the name to the *Lodi Weekly News*.

The big fire of October 11, 1887 destroyed the office of the *News*. There was little insurance and the paper did not resume publication.

Our Paper was a Lockeford paper and had its first issue in November 1893. It was published monthly by Rev. Ernest B. Winning, Methodist pastor of the Lockeford Church. The paper continued until August of 1894 when Rev. Winning was transferred.

The 4-page, 17-inch square paper was made up largely of church news but general Lockeford and Lodi items were included, thus making it a lively little paper.

The Woodbridge Recorder was started on October 20, 1893 by H.M. Calkins who had a reputation of not paying his board and other bills around town.

He sold the paper to James W. Murphy and Hilliard T. Welch and it lasted until May, 1894 when H.D. Calvin purchased the plant and moved it to Jackson.

Lodi Review Budget. The earliest copy of this newspaper found is dated May 12, 1894 and the last was January 1, 1898. It is believed that this is a continuation of the *Valley Review* as in 1896 they were completing their 18th volume and using the office of the *Valley Review* for printing jobs.

Arthur "Marq" Marquardt on the right, shown having fun with Norris Mills, sometimes known as Colonel Martingale.

This magazine-type publication appeared every Saturday afternoon. The owners were George R. Broadbere, J.E. Ruggles and S.G. Spencer until 1895 when Ruggles and Reuck were listed as proprietors and Sam B. Axtell, secretary.

In August 1895, the paper printed a special 32-page edition made up of fine articles regarding the qualities of Lodi and north San Joaquin County.

The Lodi Sun started December 11, 1896 with George L. Shoals editor and publisher. It was published weekly on Friday at a subscription rate of $1.00 per year. The paper was in pamphlet form printed on good quality book paper. It was comprised of 12 pages, 9 inches by 12 inches in size.

A year earlier Mr. Shoals went to work for *The Sentinel* as pressman for their new Campbell cylinder press. He was told that his employment would end after the election campaign of 1896.

He had planned to start his own paper with separate sections devoted to reporting news of Woodbridge, Lockeford and Clements. He convinced a number of prominent Lodi men to back him. A note from the Bank of Lodi was for one percent interest plus $20.00 on the principle. It was signed by Wright & Corson, Henry Thompson, Jim Blodgett, E.H. Wright, J. Fitzgerald, M.T. Wallace and William Ennis.

The paper was very popular and Mr. Shoals worked very hard. The paper was kept going until May 27, 1897 when an attachment was served.

At this point G.L. Shoals left on a bicycle for Stockton and never came back. The bicycle was left at Higginbotham's stable and later returned to Lillie Brothers in Lodi from whom it had been hired.

The contents of the office were sold to Sam B. Axtell and the cash realized from the sale was applied on the note and the joint signers paid the balance, vowing not to be suckers "when the next man came along."

The Acampo Skyline was published in 1897 by two women, Mamie Stanford and Elsie Wilkinson. The paper was four or five pages and very short lived.

The Lodi Weekly Herald was started in 1899. We know Henry F. Ellis was editor in August 1901 and it is possible he was the founder. Three years later Charles Perryman was co-editor for a while and then Mr. Sargent replaced Ellis. Sixteen months later, February 10, 1906 the weekly paper became a daily and Mr. Hopkins became a partner.

In January 1909, George L. North is listed as editor and proprietor of the *Lodi Daily Herald*. Further history is not known.

The Lodi Post was founded in February 1911 by editor and publisher Harry Noyes Pratt. This was an evening paper and was issued on Monday, Wednesday and Friday with eight pages 15 inches by 22 inches in size.

The paper lasted until November 1911 when the assets were purchased by *The Sentinel*.

Now Back to the Lodi News Sentinel ...

Paul Zimmerman, staff photographer started with the paper on April 1, 1954 and four years later he won a first place award for the best spot news photo. Paul was covering the fire at Smith & Lang Department Store in Stockton in July. He caught a picture of a fireman suffering from smoke inhalation and staggering from the burning building. It won first prize and picture of the month in a United Press International contest among its own photographers. The picture was used

▲ *1960. George Hughes, mayor of Lodi and Rotary Club President, making a presentation to two of Lodi's finest paper boys.*

▶ *In May of 1947, the News-Sentinel moved, with the help of Les Irey, to its ninth home, 212 West Pine Street. Paul Zimmerman on the right.*

nationally after first appearing in the *Lodi News-Sentinel.*

Paul became managing editor nine years later.

On April 1, 1959 Frederick E. Weybret purchased the *Lodi News-Sentinel* from Clyde Church and Arthur (Marq) Marquardt. Mr. Weybret tells a story of the events that took place before the final sale price was set that would make the people of Lodi proud to have known both of these fine gentlemen. Fred named Ray C. Anderson as associate publisher. Ray worked for Fred and his father, the late Senator F. Weybret at the *La Grande (Oregon) Evening Observer.*

Fred Weybret served three years in the Pacific during World War II. After graduating from Stanford University he published the *La Grande (Oregon) Evening Observer* and in 1956 began publishing the *Paso Robles Daily Press.*

In April of 1960 Jim Egan retired from his service with the *Lodi News-Sentinel.* He had been with the paper almost seven years and during that time he was engaged in almost every phase of newspaper writing, including sports, general news, police reporting, editorials, city editor, features and also a column by "Watt A. Wiseacre."

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Mr. Egan passed away December 19, 1967 at the age of 74.

In February 1964 the *Lodi News-Sentinel* won the General Excellence award as best newspaper for its size in California.

On July 10, 1964 the *Lodi News-Sentinel* lost a valuable asset to its institution. Delmar Rinfret, once publisher and long time advertising manager of the *News-Sentinel* passed away at the age of 70.

Norris C. Mills (Col.) city editor until March 1959 continued to work part-time for the *Sentinel.*

In November, 1968 the *Lodi News-Sentinel* moved into a fine new building on the S.W. corner of Locust and north Church Streets. This was the former location of the 45-year old Bethel Open Bible Church. Les Irey again moved the printing equipment.

The first publication from the new location was dated November 11, 1968.

February 1, 1969 was the official dedication of the new building.

June, 1972 the *Lodi News-Sentinel* began publication from cold type, replacing the old conventional linotypes and hot metal. It was the first newspaper west of the Rocky Mountains to use the new dynaflex, plastic plate and photo computers.

December 15, 1972 Clyde Church, former owner of the *Lodi News-Sentinel* passes away at age 80.

February, 1973 *News-Sentinel* publisher, Fred Weybret is named President of the California Newspapers Publishers Association.

In 1974, Ray C. Anderson, associate publisher, retires after 33 years in the newspaper business.

April 1975, Dan Battalina replaced Larry Rigg as advertising manager.

Lodi Life and Times was started by Stephen Mann in September 1975 as a Sunday weekly. It was later changed to a mid-week publication, then twice weekly three years later. Mr . Mann sold a 20 percent interest in the paper to Myrtle Mays who eventually acquired full ownership February 8, 1982 and one year later the publication was suspended.

In 1976 the *News-Sentinel* stopped using all the old fashioned linotypes.

January, 1979 Marty Weybret joins the *News-Sentinel* as Administrative Assistant to the Publisher.

▲ *l to r: Jim Weybret, Business Manager and Co-Publisher; Fred Weybret, Board Chairman and Marty Weybret, Editor and Publisher.*

October, 1984 Managing Editor Paul Zimmerman retires due to ill health. Marty Weybret assumes position of managing editor and brother James joins the staff as business manager.

In 1985 the *Lodi News-Sentinel* stopped using telephone lines for the world news and converted to satellites.

June 1, 1985 Arthur (Marq) Marquardt passes away at age 79.

February 6, 1988 Ray C. Anderson passes away at age 85.

October 1, 1993 Fred Weybret relinquishes his position of Editor and Publisher. Marty Weybret was named Editor and co-publisher, and Jim Weybret was named Business Manager and co-publisher. Fred assumes position of Board Chairman.

The Ellis family, father and three sons, were in control of the *Sentinel* in the 1880's. The Weybret family, father and two sons, are in charge of the *News-Sentinel* in the 1990's.

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